

Mayor's Newsletter

[City of Van Alstyne, Texas](#) > Mayor's Newsletter

Mayor's Newsletter – May 2017

May 17, 2017 by jgould



April 24, 2017

Fellow citizens,

First, I would like to thank our chamber of commerce for putting on the Meet the Candidates forum. The meeting was very well organized and well attended. It is great to see so many of our folks interested and engaging in our local election. I believe that the questions posed brought out our candidates' personalities and views, and I hope that this will help our voters make their decisions.

I feel compelled to straighten out a couple of the issues brought up in the forum. One item is likely a misinterpretation of something one of the candidates saw in print, and the other is a newspaper misquote of one of the candidates who provided factual information during the meeting:

One of the candidates told the crowd that the city has a budget line item for Starbucks coffee. This is not at all true. No one in city government gets Starbucks coffee on the taxpayers' dime. What the candidate had undoubtedly seen was a graphic illustration in

the fiscal year 2016 – 2017 budget where the topic is the cost of governance. Starbucks coffee was listed as one of many items which some of us buy for ourselves at times. The graphic was supposed to provide some perspective on personal purchases, and the money spent, versus comparative costs per individual for the things that our city government provides, day to day, using your tax dollars. No one is charging the city for Starbucks coffee.

The other issue that I think I should correct is one that appeared in the April 21, 2017 issue of the Van Alstyne Leader on page 5A. Paraphrasing, the article says that Councilman Billy Plake told the audience that Palladium had, at one point in negotiations, bargained to lower the minimum age of eligibility for the Palladium Senior living center to 52, but the council held fast at 55. In fact, at one point in negotiations Palladium did try to persuade the council to lower the age limit to 55, but the council held steady at 62. And so, to avoid confusion, the lower age limit for the Palladium Senior Living Center remains 62. No one under age 62 may live in Palladium. Billy Plake's statements on this issue were correct, but he was misquoted.

I need to mention two job openings at our Community Development Center: one for a Director and one for an Administrative Assistant: **Director:** Provide leadership of the Community Development Corporation (CDC). The CDC is a not-for-profit organization incorporated to provide programs, offer services and engage in other activities that promote and support Van Alstyne, TX. Specifically, it is tasked with developing the retail and commercial space of Van Alstyne, in addition to, providing for improvements to the City at large, i.e. parks, green space, bike trails, etc. Duties include working with new businesses including commercial, office and retail, doing all we can to bring them to Van Alstyne. The Director will be responsible for bringing in retail/commercial business to the City; budgeting, marketing, prospect development/negotiations, business retention, oversee administrative assistant, and appropriate reporting of activities to the stakeholders. **Administrative Assistant:** Provide part time administrative support for the Van Alstyne CDC. Duties include general clerical, receptionist and project-based work. Must project a professional image through business casual dress and proper etiquette. The individual in this position must be self-motivated, discreet and able to maintain confidentiality.

I wish you all well and thank you for your citizenship.

Yours truly,



Mayor Larry Cooper

Mayor's Newsletter

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Mayor's Newsletter – April 2017

April 1, 2017 by jgould



March 25, 2017

Fellow citizens,

Welcome to springtime, everyone! I hope we continue to have a pleasant season. All of our large-scale residential construction appears to be going well. A Stonehollow representative told me that they have already sold around 20 lots. I believe Palladium is still shooting for opening up for leases at mid-year. D.R. Horton has completed their work on Village Parkway.

In a couple of weeks, I believe that a new restaurant, Jalapeños Mexican Grill, will be opening for business in the business center near the Mobil station, just north of the Pizza Hut. The restoration work on West Marshall on two buildings in our old downtown is also a welcome sight. We can all look forward to the 1873 Market at Preston and Marshall when it opens, and further east, Stonehollow is building an office. Great projects.



Straight from my notes published in the March 24 edition of the Van Alstyne Leader: There has been lots of discussion and research regarding a city government campus. All of that work and discussion will benefit the city greatly, but financially the city is not ready to jump on that project in a big way yet. Van Alstyne is definitely growing and we are financially sound, but there is no will on the part of the council or our city manager to overburden our citizens with the cost of a new government campus. We don't need the debt. The study on what we will need in the way of city buildings was worthwhile because it will be valuable information for years yet, but the construction is too expensive for us at this point in time. There is a step worth taking before we consider building anything, and that is securing some property for the future project. There are several properties that might suit the city, and who knows what may become available. We on the council appreciate your patience and will be glad for your thoughts if you want to converse with any of us. Some thought was given to soon holding a public meeting on this topic, but honestly, there is not enough information at this point to make it worth your while. There will be public meetings later. We do want to keep you informed, in print and in meetings.

On April 18th in the community center, our Chamber of Commerce will sponsor a Meet the Candidates Forum and each of the candidates in contested elections plans to be there. Questions will not come directly from the crowd, but questions may be provided to the Chamber of Commerce prior to the forum. Your questions may be submitted via email to www.surveymonkey.com/r/VFXNQKG, or they may be placed in boxes at Texas Star Bank or the Senior Center. The questions will be reviewed and compiled so that the moderator will have them ready. Prior to questioning the candidates, the President of our Economic Development Corporation (EDC), Mr. Randy Uselton, will be making an important presentation regarding questions 1 and 2, appearing on our May election ballot. While city government may only inform, and not promote any of the options, the EDC however is free to promote as they wish and so this will be well worth hearing. Please make time for this event. The doors will open at 6:00 P.M. and the discussion will begin at 6:30.

God bless you all.



Sincerely,

Mayor Larry Cooper



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Mayor's Newsletter – March 2017

March 15, 2017 by jgould



February 23, 2017

Fellow citizens,

Among notes I wrote for the Van Alstyne Leader a few weeks ago, I mentioned the issue of a possible conversion of our Economic Development Corporation (EDC) into a different city entity called a Municipal Development District (MDD). There will actually be two different questions on the ballot effecting this issue: The first question will allow the citizens of the city (city proper) to dissolve the EDC. The second question will allow the citizens of the city and our extraterritorial jurisdiction to establish the MDD.

Formation of the MDD will be contingent upon the dissolution of the EDC. After the voting, we will either have an MDD or we will retain the EDC. I will begin informing you about this possible change in this newsletter.



Our EDC is, in fact, a corporation which manages their assets and funding for the benefit of the city. They seek out industrial or commercial clients to occupy and develop the assets that they manage. They have a web site (<https://vanalstyneedc.com/>) which describes their mission, properties and board membership. These board members are a fine group of citizens and great assets to the Van Alstyne.

The EDC is funded by $\frac{1}{4}$ of 1% of the sales tax allocation received by the city. EDCs are governed by Texas Local Government Code, Chapters 501-505, and by the Texas Non-Profit Corporation Act. The Board of Directors consists of five local volunteer members: a president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and a fifth member who is still called, director. There is now a sixth person directly involved: the city has hired an EDC Director, a full-time employee of the city whose salary is paid by the EDC.

Jodi Carr is the new EDC Director. Her office is inside the Welcome Center at 228 E. Marshall and her phone number is 903-482-9587. Being a full-time employee she is more available than the volunteer board members and is charged with seeking out and gathering information from prospective lessees or buyers who will provide local employment and increase the sales and/or property tax base for Van Alstyne.

The EDC is not a political subdivision of the state or the city. As mentioned above they are truly a non-profit corporation with obligations to the city. An MDD, on the other hand, is a political entity with obligations to city government. An MDD is a political subdivision of the state and city allowed under Chapter 377 of the Texas Local Government Code. They are allowed to develop certain rules to govern their operations which would probably not be identical to the bylaws of the current EDC. They may have a larger board of directors. And a bigger change is that they don't have to be bound to sales and use tax income from the city limits of Van Alstyne, proper. Their boundary may include the city's entire Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction, which would certainly increase the sales tax funds available to them. Board personnel will not necessarily change; the current EDC board will become the MDD board. I will write more on this topic.

I hope this letter is informative. I certainly wish you all well.



Yours truly,

Mayor Larry Cooper



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Mayor's Newsletter – February 2017

February 2, 2017 by jgould



January 25, 2017

Fellow citizens,

Among notes I wrote for the Van Alstyne Leader a couple of weeks ago, I mentioned a question regarding the possible conversion of our Economic Development Corporation (EDC) into a different city entity called a Municipal Development District (MDD). This issue will almost certainly be a question on the May 6 election ballot. I don't know the exact wording for the ballot question, but the basic question will be whether we should make the conversion or not. I will begin informing you about this possible change in this newsletter.

Our EDC is, in fact, a corporation which manages their assets and funding for the benefit of the city. They seek out industrial or commercial clients to occupy and develop the



assets that they manage. They have a web site (<https://vanalstyneedc.com/>) which describes their mission, properties and board membership. These board members are a fine group of citizens and great assets to the Van Alstyne.

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On another topic, I need to let you know about the latest news on the temporary closure on FM 121. The closure of the S-curve tie has been delayed because of the power lines still in place. The January 30th closure date has been moved to February 6th. Even this new date is dependent on weather and in any case the work should take about two weeks.

I hope this letter is informative. I certainly wish you all well.

Yours truly,

Mayor Larry Cooper

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Mayor's Newsletter – January 2017

January 2, 2017 by jgould



December 27, 2016

Fellow Citizens,

HAPPY NEW YEAR! I hope your Christmas was merry too. Van Alstyne has lots to look forward to this coming year.

Dozens of new homes will be built this year by Stonehollow, D.R. Horton, Palladium and other builders. We will have another restaurant opening soon – Jalapeño's Mexican

Grill will be opening soon next door to our Pizza Hut. There are other developers looking at various properties here, both residential and commercial, and hopefully some will buy into our great city. We will see at least the first phase of our walking trail completed, from the high school down to Van Alstyne Parkway.

Now that we have utilities going on the west side of Hwy 75 I have been a little mystified about why development has not been popping there. I spoke with a realtor who told me that property owners there are holding out for more money. That's okay. More power to them. Once development kicks off then they will get the benefit of their investments. Meanwhile there is good growth on the east side.

The city council will soon begin revamping our 20-year plan. Our parks and recreation board will also be making a concerted effort, working with our consulting engineers, to get some better ideas on what we should be doing for our parks.

Water and sewer projects have gone well and under budget. The sewer-pipe bursting project is complete, and our UV disinfection process is being updated. These efforts have greatly decreased the rainwater infiltration that has been a problem for a very long time, and the wastewater plant's capacity has been increased.

There will be a meeting on January 3rd between the city, our engineers, managers of the Collin Grayson Municipal Alliance (CGMA) and experts on our system for monitoring and controlling our water system. We hope to soon begin using the water supplied under our CGMA agreement with our sister city partners. There will be further notice to you when we actually begin using this water. At this time, we are set up for further testing our existing system to be sure that we are ready to integrate this new water supply.

It is my hope that growth in Van Alstyne will remain moderate and steady. The main reason for my hope is that it will be difficult to make sure that our roadways are prepared for our growth. FM 121 is being improved at this time. Widening of Hwy 75 and the work on our exit/entrance ramps are perhaps three years away. Hwy 5 widening is a little further out, but maybe starting in 2020. These are estimates, all depending on TXDOT's funding.



Thank you all for your citizenship.

Yours truly,

Mayor Larry Cooper

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Mayor's Newsletter – December 2016

December 25, 2016 by jgould



November 25, 2016

Fellow citizens,

I hope everyone has had a happy Thanksgiving. We could not ask for better weather, though we all know that it won't last through the winter.

Many have heard of two closures of FM 121. You may have read in today's Van Alstyne Leader about the first closure which is set to begin on November 29th and so may be

over with as you read this letter. The second closure is supposed to last about two weeks. There is no date certain for the start of the second closure, but our County Judge, Bill Magers, was a guest at recent VA Economic Development Commission meeting, and he said there that he did not believe that this closure would begin before Christmas. The closures will be temporary inconveniences for many but the resulting widening of the road and remodeling of the S-curve will benefit Van Alstyne greatly. I will update you as I get more news.

We have two great events coming up on Saturday, December 10th: our downtown Christmas Parade and the Annual Scouts' BBQ.

Please plan to attend the parade beginning at 2:00 P.M. on Saturday, December 10, 2016. Anyone participating in the parade will line up at the old football field near our park on North Waco (Hwy 5) at 1:00 P.M. Anyone needing more information should look at the Chamber's web site, vanalstynechamber.org. The longest leg of the parade will be on Waco from Texana to Marshall Street. The parade will proceed east on Marshall, then north on Main for a block, west on Jefferson for a block, and finally north on Preston Street, ending near Dorothy Fielder Park. "A Picture-Perfect Christmas" will be the parade theme. Santa will be available at Dorothy Fielder Park for photos until 3:30 and these events will wrap up at 4:00 P.M. Hot chocolate and cookies will be served.

After the parade our scouts will be serving a huge BBQ buffet starting at 5:30. The buffet will be held at the First Methodist Church Sanford Center Gym and will feature more dishes and desserts than I can list here until 8:00 P.M. There will also be a silent auction, all of the proceeds will go toward maintenance of the scouts' facilities here in Van Alstyne. Your support for our scouts will be greatly appreciated. The buffet will be tremendous, I promise you.

With colder weather coming, house fires become a bigger issue. The American Red Cross offers free smoke alarm installation for those who need the assistance. A free smoke alarm registration form will be available on the City's web site. Another thing the Red Cross is promoting is the mapping of escape plans for your homes. Please take

advantage of these offerings; they could save lives. If you would like to call them, their Denison phone number is 903-465-1330.

I will be writing VA construction progress updates for upcoming issues of the Van Alstyne Leader. I will also see what news I can gather regarding future roadway planning.

The City of Van Alstyne wishes everyone happy holidays, and we hope to see you at our festivities.

Yours truly,

Mayor Larry Cooper

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Mayor's Newsletter – November 2016

November 1, 2016 by jgould



October 28, 2016

Fellow citizens,



I love the cooler weather. Fall is my favorite time of the year. By the time you get this we will have had our downtown trick or treat. We thank downtown merchants and churches who take part in this. The turnout has always been great. Lots of fun for everyone.

The update on our large residential projects sounds about the same: Still lots of progress for Palladium, Stonehollow and D.R. Horton. Another thing we can look forward to is improvement to roads adjacent to these projects. With rare exceptions, all of our newer streets will be wider, concrete, and with curbs and gutters.

A lot of potential new development is confidential (because deals aren't done), and so I can't get very specific at all, but there has been some very healthy interest in properties in the northern area of town. We will see what comes of this interest. Some of what may happen has to do with the number of rooftops that we have, and therefore may be a few years out. We are getting more and more rooftops though; we will likely add a couple hundred within the next two years.

We will soon have a new position assisting our Economic Development Corporation (EDC). Working closely with the EDC, the city is in the process of hiring and Economic Development Director. Several men and women have been interviewed for the position in an intensive process. All are good candidates and soon a choice will be made. The fact that our EDC is solid enough financially, and in leadership, to take on such a mission-dedicated employee is very, very encouraging. This director will greatly extend the outreach to potential businesses. He or she will do this outreach and continue the excellent communications between the EDC, the business community, and city government. This hire is definitely a step forward for Van Alstyne.

Get ready for a Christmas parade. The Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring and the theme is "A Picture-Perfect Christmas." Keep Van Alstyne Beautiful will decorate in advance on December 3rd from 10 to 12 A.M. The parade will happen on Saturday, December 10th from 2 to 3 P.M., with the lineup starting at 1:00 P.M.

Take care, everyone. I wish you all well.



Yours truly,

Mayor Larry Cooper

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Mayor's Newsletter – October 2016

October 13, 2016 by City of Van Alstyne



September 26, 2016

Fellow citizens,

Fall is in the air today, and we've had a good, much-needed rain. So far this Monday afternoon, I have two inches in my rain gauge.

It is probably no news to most of you that Fall Der All was a great success. Our Chamber of Commerce has put on another tremendous event. I saw steady streams of folks going in and out of our downtown businesses, and our museum also. Hats off to Chamber President, Brenda McDonald, and event coordinator, Connie Cristensen. Of

course the entire Chamber Board was heavily involved and more hard working volunteers than I can list in this letter. Our city workers did a fine job too, from parade to cleanup. This was all especially well coordinated. It was a great day.

I have also been told that the Friends of the Library book sale was very successful. If this letter gets to you in time, don't forget about the Friends' Breakfast at the community center this Saturday, October 1st. This is another hard working, community minded organization and they deserve our support.

I want to give special thanks to Mr. Robert Lewis. He serves steadfastly on our Community Development Corporation Board, but he has also done some very visible work on a couple of historical icons for Van Alstyne: The railcar that serves as a bandstand on South Main Street, and the rail switch house standing just to the north of the railcar. He has done beautiful restoration work on these two projects, I think practically single-handedly. He deserves our hearty thanks.

Stonehollow's subdivision work is going very well and is looking very smooth. New houses should be going up there soon. I believe that the show-homes will be near Kelly Lane and the new, Thompson Street. D.R. Horton's project is also going well. They have done a tremendous amount of dirt work. The hill is gone and they appear to have their streets carved out. They will be buying many building permits this fiscal year, I am sure.

I may have mentioned this in Mayor's Notes for the Van Alstyne Leader already, but I want to announce again that Van Alstyne has finally reached a million dollar year in sales tax allocations. Of course, this is great news and says a lot about our growing, solid business community.

I hope you are all well and looking forward to the holiday season.

Yours truly,
Mayor Larry Cooper



Mayor's Newsletter – September 2016

August 28, 2016 by City of Van Alstyne



August 28, 2016

Fellow citizens,

Hot summer greetings, everyone. We haven't had enough rain, but no floods then either. I'm trying to keep my own water bill down as best I can. My Bermuda grass is tough and some time ago I got some good advice on draught resistant trees and shrubs from our own Green Acre Garden Center on West Van Alstyne Parkway. I'm not an accomplished landscaper, but I am glad that I planted some desert willows and a Chastetree (Vitex) in my front yard. The Chase-tree is normally a bush, but so far I have been able to prune it into a small tree. Roses are a lot tougher than I thought too.

On to city business: A controversial zoning change request will most likely be on the city council agenda for September 13th. This is a requested change for the area of 206 E. Houston near 722 S. Main. The owner is requesting that the zoning for that property to be changed from "Single Family Residential District – 1 (or SF-1) to "Single Family Residential District – Zero Lot Line Homes (or SF-Z)." This discussion was continued from the August 9th city council meeting because of uncertainty as to whether there was adequate notice of the hearing. This agenda item deserves a thorough examination by the council as arguments should be heard from all concerned. Other items coming up are public meetings on September 6th and September 13th.



September 6th will regard a proposed property tax rate (the proposal is to keep this tax rate the same); then on September 13th a regular council meeting agenda will include council deliberation of a 3% increase in water/sewer rates (an item on which there will be a public hearing as well).

Our taking of Collin/Grayson Municipal Alliance (GTMA) water piped up through Anna and Melissa has been delayed, but hopefully not for long. System and water quality testing must be completed and this should not be rushed. It is possible that we might not start taking this water until October. On a brighter note, Stonehollow may begin raising houses in early October. I am also seeing stakes in D.R. Horton's property at Kelley Ln. and Village Parkway.

Get yourselves memorialized in Dorothy Fielder Park! Engraved bricks are still available at Texas Star Bank. The application is easy and your brick will cost only \$60, or \$50 each for two or more.

The Chamber of Commerce will sponsor another Music in the Park this summer. On September 12th from 6:30 to 8 P.M. there will be a free concert and Tony Ramey will be the featured artist.

Yours truly,
Mayor Larry Cooper

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Mayor's Newsletter – August 2016

July 25, 2016 by City of Van Alstyne





July 25, 2016

Fellow citizens,

There is nothing earthshakingly new to report in this newsletter, only reports on the progress in projects that have been in the works for some time now. The work on the **Palladium** senior living project is very impressive. Driving by this area on Blassingame, the size of the lot and the amount of dirt-work already done will surprise you. We are all looking forward to seeing this project completed.

Stonehollow appears to have poured most of their streets and gutters. The concrete drainage work is impressive. Knowing that their utilities are in and most of the streets are poured, I am hoping that by the time the next newsletter rolls around there will be houses starting up. Housing is selling so quickly here we need the new inventory. The last two lots remaining in the first phase of the Georgetown subdivision (the lots that the construction trailer was parked on) are being built up, but I'm told that those homes are already sold.

Our main sewer renewal, pipe-bursting work is very near completion. Our new water line loop construction and testing is finished to the extent that we still expect to start supplying water through it early this month (August).



I wrote a little about the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in my latest notes for the Van Alstyne Leader. Anticipating the growth that will most likely occur in Van Alstyne over the next two decades at least, development of our roadways is a big concern. I have learned that this huge issue is already being closely considered by a great group of concerned, county-wide individuals, working out roadway details in partnership with Grayson County and the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT). After passage of State Propositions 1 and 7, there are more funds available to develop our Texas roadways. Realizing the importance of this development to our city, city legislature (the council), city administration (our city manager and administrative staff), county commission (our representative, Jeff Whitmire), the MPO (including board representative, Mr. Bill Benton) and TXDOT are all working in a partnership that will take advantage of this funding, and hopefully keep up with our needs here in Van Alstyne. Invaluable assistance is also being provided by our consulting engineers, McManus & Johnson, LLC.

I will write in more detail as I get more details, but we here in Van Alstyne can expect dramatic changes in our major roadways within the next few years. Our major arteries (Hwy 75, Hwy 5 and FM 121) are scheduled for major improvements. Every effort will

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Mayor Larry Cooper

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